

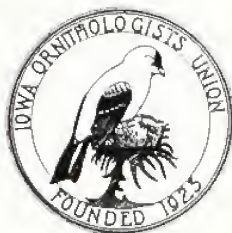
# IOWA BIRD LIFE

PUBLISHED QUARTERLY BY THE  
IOWA ORNITHOLOGISTS' UNION

VOL. XXV

SEPTEMBER, 1955

NO. 3



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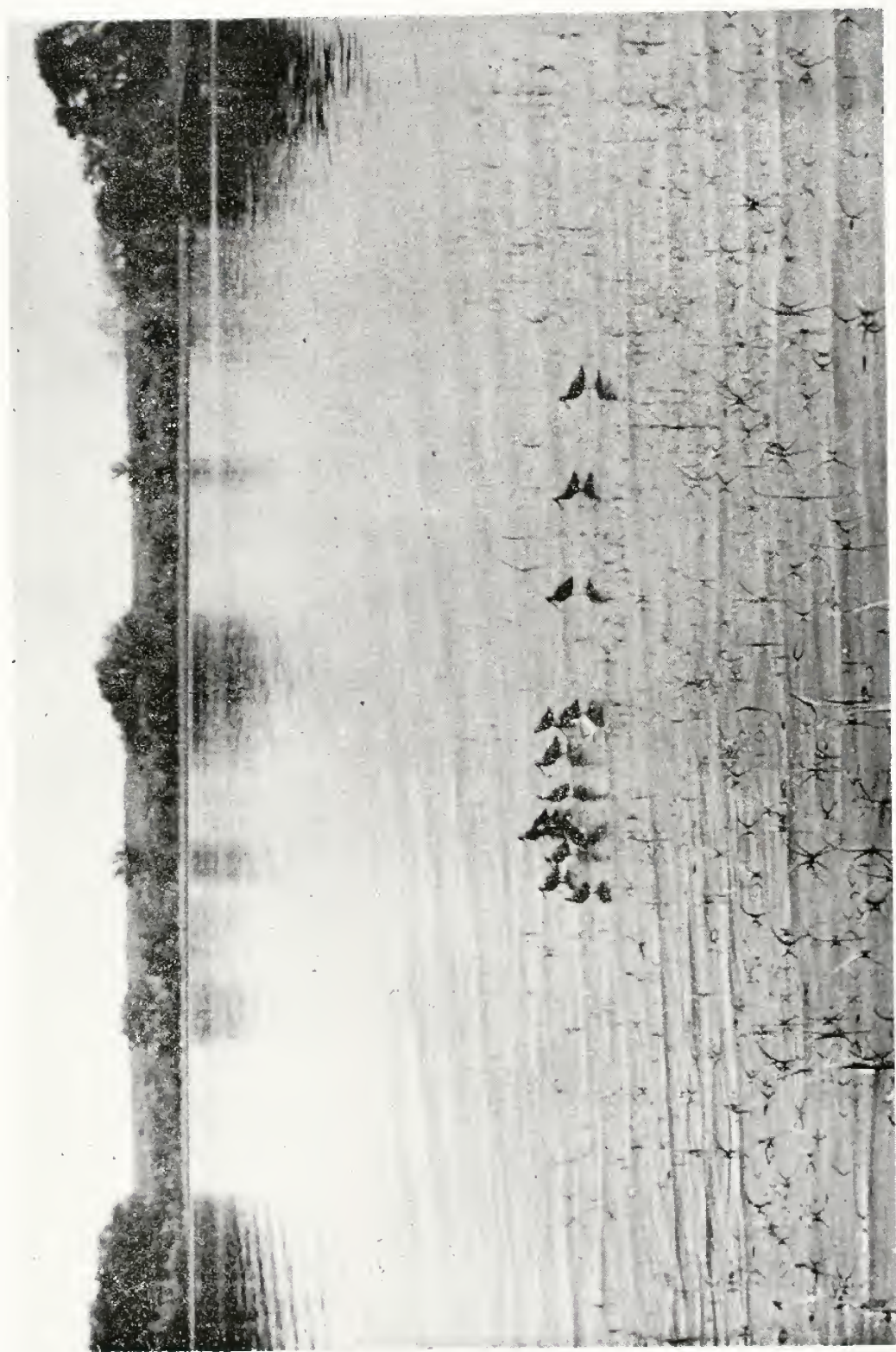
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SUBSCRIPTION RATE: \$2.00 a year. Single copies 50c each. Subscription to the magazine is included in all paid memberships, of which there are four classes, as follows: Contributing Member, \$10.00 a year; Supporting Member, \$5.00 a year; Regular Member, \$2.00 a year; Junior Member (under 16 years of age), \$1.00 a year.

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EDITORIAL AND PUBLICATION OFFICE  
WINTHROP, IOWA



## A SECOND CENTURY DAY IN THE IOWA CITY REGION

By ROBERT F. VANE  
CEDAR RAPIDS, IOWA

At the Editor's request, this follow-up article is being written concerning a second annual Century Day of birding at Iowa City on Sunday, May 8, 1955. Those of you who may have read the earlier article printed in the September, 1954, issue of *Iowa Bird Life* will be familiar with the general area covered and the itinerary which includes varied habitats.

To new readers, however, a short summary will be helpful. As in the previous year, at 5 a.m. I joined the Iowa City group composed of Fred W. Kent and Dr. and Mrs. Peter Laude, and in turn we were joined at noon by James Decker. Our route led to the Iowa City Country Club and its timbered bottom land along the Iowa River. The Country Club grounds led into Dunham's farm with its woodland, open fields and brushy areas. Following breakfast Swan Lake was covered and the Iowa River valley west to Amana Lake. The return trip was by way of another road in the Iowa River valley crossing Hanging Rock Bridge to revisit Swan Lake and thence on to Iowa City, a total distance of about 70 miles.

The final compilation of our single car of observers totaled 125 species for the day, bettering last year's total by five species. Our day was clear and bright, a chill 38 degrees to start with, rising to the low 70's.

To mention a few of the more interesting species observed will not be out of place. In the Country Club and Dunham's farm area, which are continuous, no less than 18 species of warblers were seen, with particularly fine views of the Parula, Cerulean, Black-throated Green and Wilson's Warblers. In this area a young Great Horned Owl was observed lying on a limb; both Alder and Least Flycatchers were heard and seen; a Blue-gray Gnatcatcher nervously fluttered from limb to limb, and a beautifully spectacled Blue-headed Vireo, one of my very favorites, was found. In this general area, too, the Lincoln's Sparrow with its fine breast streakings was observed at length.

As we approached Swan Lake a Swainson's Hawk, a rare find for our area, was seen circling high overhead, and in the fields and on the shore were several American Pipits. Indeed, one of these was first seen on the barbed-wire of a fence wagging its tail for all it was worth. It was the first time we had ever seen a Pipit perched above the ground. At Swan Lake an American Bittern was flushed in our walk around the lake.

The road west to Amana Lake led through interesting territory, and in one roadside thicket we found both Gambel's and White-crowned Sparrows.

Amana Lake had several fine shorelines, and here we found a gorgeous flock of 16 Dowitchers which were joined by a beautifully-plumaged Hudsonian Godwit even as we watched them.

In examining the distant lake shore through his telescope, a most unusual find, an Avocet, came into Fred Kent's view! Fred promptly proceeded to take a picture of it completely across the lake by using a prism-equipped 35 mm. camera on a mount directly behind the 'scope and focusing the camera through the telescope itself. This was a relatively new technique which Fred had used with remarkable results in bird photography this spring, adding it to his stereo and other techniques.

The day had now slipped by, and reluctantly we headed back for Iowa City. Again we passed Swan Lake, and yes, there in the plowed fields were the Golden Plovers for which we had been literally straining our eyes. A fitting climax to another Century Day in the Iowa City region!

## BIRD STUDY IN A FIELD COURSE IN NATURAL HISTORY

By MARTIN L. GRANT

Iowa State Teachers College  
CEDAR FALLS, IOWA

In the summer of 1955 Iowa State Teachers College tried something new, a course in natural history that was given entirely out-of-doors, spread over 6,600 miles through the 12 states west and north of Iowa. The trip proper took six weeks (June 20 to July 29), with an additional week spent on the Cedar Falls campus beforehand (for orientation), and another week at the end, to compile the observations, write up reports, and take examinations. Travel was by college bus, stopping overnight at motels and cabin camps, and eating in restaurants. The average cost per student was \$410, which included board and lodging for the whole eight weeks, as well as tuition (ten quarter-hours college credit), transportation, admissions and insurance. Not included was the cost of books, laundry, souvenirs, and other personal incidentals.

The 14 students were all school teachers, two men and 12 women. While half of them were 25 years of age or younger, the extremes ranged from 19 to the 60's. All but one took many photographs (a total of over 1500), and most of them made collections of rocks, minerals, plants, small animals, fossils, postcards, books, etc., for use in their teaching work. As an example, we brought back about 500 species of pressed and dried plants, mostly flowers and tree-branches.

We visited 12 national parks and monuments, 7 wild-life preserves, 33 national forests, 9 Indian reservations, and 10 reclamation, power, and flood-control projects. Also we stopped at state parks, biological laboratories, museums, mines, dams, and bridges. We ran into desert heat, mountain snowstorms, occasional rain and hail, and experienced mosquito bites, sunburn, snowburn, waterburn, seasickness, scratches, wet feet, and muddy shoes. Although using the bus practically all the time, we travelled by boat on Lake Okoboji (Iowa), Flathead Lake (Montana), the Columbia River, and the Pacific Ocean.

An attempt was made to touch almost all phases of natural history. A major underlying interest was geography, and so we noticed the river systems (mainly the Missouri, Columbia, and Colorado) and the mountain ranges (Rockies, Cascades, and Coast Mountains). Each student was responsible for one major region, usually a state, and wrote it up as a final report. The major fields of natural history were similarly treated. Students made special studies, usually in pairs, of geological processes and formations, rocks and minerals, climate, Indians, mammals, birds, reptiles and amphibia, insects, aquatic animals, forests, trees and shrubs, and wild flowers. The conservation aspects of each subject were emphasized. Each of the subjects was written up, and the reports were duplicated, so that each student received a complete copy of all the observations of every one, in the form of a volume of 280 pages. This book includes a complete itinerary, with the population and elevation of each of the places visited, and a record of almost everything we did and all that we saw, with check-lists of the types of rocks, animals, and plants observed.

Thus ornithology was only one of a dozen major subjects studied, but, for Iowa Bird Life, some of the details of that aspect of the trip will be presented. The two students who kept the most complete bird records were Lois Baker, of Mason City, and Pauline Wershofen, of Cedar Rapids. Daily lists for each locality were kept by these students and the instructor, and

when these were totaled the full list came to 220 different species and 47 additional subspecies (267 forms), representing 49 families. The only non-tropical and non-marine U.S. families not found were the loons (just a vagary of chance), turkeys (eastern), cranes (more chance), owls (we didn't go out at night) and wren-tits. Probably many of you have seen 220 species of birds in a single complete year right here in Iowa, but because of the season in which we took our trip, all the birds we found (perhaps a dozen exceptions) were breeding birds.

Perhaps the most interesting spot, ornithologically speaking, that we visited was the Tule Lake Bird Refuge in northeastern California, where we found grebes (Eared and Western), White Pelicans, several herons (including Snowy and American Egrets), Glossy Ibises, Whistling Swans, geese (Canada, White-fronted, and Snow), eight species of ducks, Ruddy Turnstones, Long-billed Curlews, Willets, Avocets, and Stilts. Perhaps next in interest was the extreme northwest corner of Washington, where we visited Carroll Island to see some of the breeding sea birds. In this area we banded half a dozen Glaucous-winged Gulls, chased Tufted Puffins out of their burrows, and observed three species of cormorants, Black Oyster-catchers, other gulls (California, Western, Herring, and Ring-billed), California Murres, and Pigeon Guillemots.

Another habitat, quite different from what we find in Iowa, was the mountain-tops in Colorado, Wyoming, Montana, and Washington, with mainly perching birds: Nutcrackers, Varied and Hermit Thrushes, Pipits, and Gray-crowned and Brown-capped Rosy Finches. The forests at middle elevations, though, furnished the most different species of birds: Golden and Bald Eagles, Duck Hawks, Sooty and Ruffed Grouse, Band-tailed Pigeons, White-throated Swifts, Calliope and Rufous Hummingbirds, woodpeckers (Pileated, Lewis's, White-headed, and Arctic Three-toed), Williamson's Sapsuckers, jays (Canada, Oregon, and Steller's), Mountain Chickadees, Bush-tits, Chestnut-backed Bluebirds, Townsend's and Macgillivray's Warblers, Bullock's Orioles, Western Tanagers, Pine Grosbeaks, Spotted Towhees, and four species of juncos.

In prairie areas we found Prairie Chickens, Arkansas Kingbirds, Blue Grosbeaks, and Lark Buntings, all of which have been seen in western Iowa, and in the drier sagebrush plains and deserts were Swainson's and Ferruginous Rough-legged Hawks, Prairie Falcons, California Quail, Red-shafted Flickers, Say's Phoebes, American Ravens, Rock Wrens, Sage Thrashers, Lazuli Buntings, House Finches, Green-backed Goldfinches, and Sage and Brewer's Sparrows.

Nests were observed of the American Three-toed Woodpecker (the youngsters can really peck at a finger!), Osprey (but we couldn't reach it), Hammond Flycatcher, Violet-green Swallow, Mountain Bluebird, Audubon's Warbler, Yellow-headed Blackbird, and White-crowned Sparrow. And this summary of the more interesting species encountered can end with a few miscellaneous water birds: Holboell's Grebes, Barrows' Golden-eyes, Harlequin Ducks, three species of Scoters, Caspian Terns, Rhinoceros Auklets, and Water Ouzels.

To close with a few statistics: we spent an average of three and a half days, including travel time, in each of the 12 states, and saw an average of 55 species in each state. We saw the greatest number of species and spent the most time in Washington (eight days and 92 species), next being California (only four days but 84 species), third being Iowa (five days and 80 species), and so on down to Idaho, Nevada, and Nebraska, in which only one day each was spent. The only birds seen in all 12 states were the Mourning Dove, Barn Swallow, and House Sparrow, though the Western Meadowlark

was seen in all but Oregon (our time there was spent on the coast and in the mountains), and the Brewer's Blackbird in all but Iowa. Almost 100 species were seen only in one state each. For 28 of these species, only one individual was observed. At the other end of the scale, the species of which we saw the most individuals was Brewer's Blackbird (2,840), followed by Redwing (2,521), Bronzed Grackle (1,818), Mallard (1,647), Cinnamon Teal (1,608), and Cliff Swallow (1,422). The grand total was 34,432 individuals for the 220 species.

Identifying and counting birds, while easy to summarize in numbers, is, of course, only a beginning in bird study, and much more important was what we learned about their habits and environmental relations. All in all, it was an extremely interesting, but busy, trip, packed full of inspiring sights and wild-life observations.

## THE PILEATED WOODPECKER IN IOWA, WITH NESTING NOTES ON JONES COUNTY

By J. HAROLD ENNIS

Cornell College  
MOUNT VERNON, IOWA

It is a banner day for the field ornithologist in Iowa when the Pileated Woodpecker (*Ceophloeus pileatus*) is observed. The race represented in this state is the Northern Pileated or *C. p. abieticola* Bangs. By the Trautman table<sup>1</sup>, woodpeckers seen in numbers of two to five a season, or two or less a day, may be regarded as "rare." According to this measure, the Pileated Woodpecker may generally be classed as a rare permanent resident in Iowa.

Records for this species are scattered over the state, but predominate in those counties near or bordering the Mississippi River. Published references exist for the following counties:

- Northeast—Allamakee, Chickasaw, Clayton, Winneshiek.
- East-central—Blackhawk, Buchanan, Clinton, Delaware, Dubuque, Jackson, Jones, Linn.
- Southeast—Keokuk, Lee, Louisa.
- North-central—Butler, Emmet, Kossuth.
- Central—Boone.
- South-central—Decatur.
- West-central—Woodbury.

Christmas census records exist from Dubuque County for several years, with a few others from Backbone State Park.

Nesting records are less common. This may be due partly, of course, to the relatively small sample of observers over the state who have very limited time to give over to field study. Three nesting observations were made by Coe<sup>2</sup>, the Polderboers<sup>3</sup>, and Orr<sup>4</sup>. Recent records appear to be scarce.

Consequently when the writer was casually informed by Ted Climer, Boy Scout Executive of Anamosa, Iowa, that he had cooked pancakes over an open fire within 50 feet of a nesting pair of "Pileateds," skepticism was expressed. Mr. Climer promptly offered his services as a guide to the nesting spot. As a result of this conversation, a trip was made on the afternoon of June 5, 1955, to the Pictured Rocks Wilderness Area southeast of Monticello, Iowa. Accompanying Mrs. Ennis and me were Dr. and Mrs. L. E. Bigger of Mount Vernon, with Mr. and Mrs. Climer as guides. The road into the Wilderness Area ends a short distance from the Maquoketa River,

1. The Birds of Buckeye Lake, Ohio, by Milton B. Trautman. Pp. 152-3.

2. Iowa Bird Life, XVII, p. 56.

3. Iowa Bird Life, XVIII, pp. 15-16.

4. Iowa Bird Life, X, pp. 47-8.

a spot frequently sought by fishermen. About 100 feet from the end of this road is a large broken tree-stub from which all the limbs and most of the bark were gone. This was the "nest tree." The nest hole was located about 15 feet above the ground on the north side of the stub. While we waited, two adult birds were seen to enter the nest about 15 minutes apart.

The following day, June 6, David Ennis and I returned to photograph the birds with 16 mm. color movie film. The female arrived at the nest about 3:30 p.m. and the male reached the immediate area about 4:15.

On June 8, Dr. Robert Vane, Fred Kent, David Ennis, and I reached the area about 3 p.m. The arrival times of the birds at the nest were 3:30, 3:35, 4:45, 5:50, and 6. Our car was parked within 50 feet of the nest stub, and excellent opportunity was afforded for those in the car to take pictures or observe the adult birds. Although the birds appeared to approach the area with some caution and to move gradually from tree to tree as they neared the nesting stub, they even tolerated one or two of us outside the "car-blind" with our cameras. All observers present on this occasion attempted to take full advantage of the opportunity.

Another trip was made on June 15. This time we were joined by Mrs. Robert Vane and Dr. L. F. Vane. We arrived in the area again about 3 p.m. About 3:20 the first bird reached the immediate nesting area, and 10



ADULT PILEATED WOODPECKER AT NEST HOLE IN JONES COUNTY, IOWA  
 Photographed by Fred W. Kent, June 8, 1955

minutes later the second bird arrived at a nearby tree. Almost immediately the first bird (female) went to the nest hole and appeared to feed three nestlings. The male bird flew to a tree adjacent to the nest stub at 4:10, but again left the immediate area without feeding the young. At 4:50 the female approached the nest for the second time and fed the young. This time she lit on the trunk about 7 feet from the ground, where she hesitated for a few minutes. She then went around to the back of the trunk and slowly edged her way up, spiraling to the hole. One young came to the hole entrance to be fed; the others were fed by the female entering the nest. In a few moments she emerged carrying excrement, as she usually did, from the nest.

On June 16 I again returned to the area, this time with my ornithology class. Dr. and Mrs. Laude of Iowa City, Miss Lillian Serbousek and Miss Myra Willis of Cedar Rapids were also present. Both adult birds were seen shortly after our arrival about 3:20 p.m. Again the male appeared more wary and did not feed the nestlings. The female made only one trip to the nest hole while we were present, feeding one young at the entrance and the others by entering the nest. When the female finally left she again was carrying excrement from the nest.

With Dr. Dorothy Newbury of Mount Vernon and Mr. Vance Allyn of New Hampshire, I arrived June 21 at the Picture Rocks Area about 3 p.m. One of the Pileated young was looking out of the nesting hole. It was a young male and appeared to spend much of its time looking about the area in front of the nesting stub, occasionally giving a call resembling a Flicker. The adult male was seen in a nearby walnut tree but did not actually approach the nesting stub. We waited until 5 p.m., but did not see the adult female. A second adult was calling in the distance, and we assumed this to be the female of this pair. Momentarily we had a glimpse of a second nestling when it appeared at the nesting hole, but it did not displace the one young who appeared to monopolize the nest entrance. While it is probably unfair to judge from this one brief observation of two hours, the non-appear-



"... THE ONE YOUNG WHO APPEARED TO MONOPOLIZE THE NEST ENTRANCE."  
(Kent photograph)

ance of the female and the casual interest of the adult male suggested that the non-feeding was an attempt to lure the young birds out of the nest.

This concludes a summary of my brief notes. It was indeed a rare experience to see an active nest of the Pileated Woodpecker. Even rarer, probably, was the location of the nest in a spot readily accessible for a car where the observers could be in complete comfort.



TWO YOUNG AND ADULT PILEATED WOODPECKER AT NESTING CAVITY  
Photographed by Fred W. Kent, June 8, 1955



ADULT BIRD AT NESTING CAVITY  
Enlarged from color moving picture film, taken by Robert Vane

## HILLS OVER THE MISSISSIPPI: A PLACE FOR BIRD STUDY

By EDWARD HEUSER  
DUBUQUE, IOWA

On a secluded, wooded hill not far from Dubuque, looking down on the rolling Mississippi River from a low, vine-draped cliff, there stands in the solitude a gray shingled house with large porches. During daylight hours a flag on top of a tall pole made from a slender ash tree waves to the traffic moving on the river.

Except on the side toward the river, the spot is surrounded by woodlands and open fields which are alive with various kinds of life according to the season, and which during the spring and summer months are a paradise of bird music. West of the little clearing in which the house stands is a hillside of dense oak, elm, maple, nut trees, and white paper birch. A path descends the steep slope to the road, which in turn follows the valley to the river.

We have named the place "Riverby" because, like John Burroughs's Riverby on the Hudson, it is a retreat from the disturbances of civilization and a haven for the observation of birds and the wild life of the river.

The cliff facing the river is rimmed with a tangled hedge of raspberry, grape, mulberry, and sumac. Shooting stars and honeysuckles bloom from the ledges, while vines and creeping plants tapestry the naked rock, with their hanging festoons draping the precipice in foliage from top to bottom.

Owls, Chickadees, Titmice, and the whole family of woodpeckers live in the enclosing woods. In fact, nearly every kind of bird that wanders up and down the fertile valley of the Mississippi may be seen in the neighborhood of Riverby, at one time or another. These include Cowbird, Baltimore Oriole, Bronzed Grackle, Brown Thrasher, Mockingbird, Whistling Swan (one observation—three birds), the spring and fall migrations of ducks and geese, Bobolinks in a clover field, Dickcissels along the power line, Blue Grosbeak (one record only, June 1, 1955), perched like an ornament on top of the flag pole, the diminutive Hummingbird floating with invisible wings on flower vapors, and the royal eagle sailing the infinite sky.

The sun goes down behind the woodland with tinted glows, flames of red and orange, hazes of violet and purple, reflecting from the water its tranquillity to the closing day. Then as night falls the Screech Owl sends out his whinnying call, larger owls glide in noiseless shadows through the interwoven woods, and myriads of fire-flies sparkle in the darkness, mixing their twinkle with the stars.

In the dawn, too, when the first light reaches over the hills to the smooth river silver and glittering, with wisps of smoky mists floating above the soundless flow, one feels the exquisite rising of the spirit reaching out over the panorama of broad water and wooded islands. At this time we may see the Egret fishing the shallows across from the hill, sometimes solitary, sometimes in numbers, with now and then a Great Blue Heron or two, all carefully lifting their steps and stretching their long necks. From beyond the little valley comes the whistle of the Bob-white, while more rarely a Ring-necked Pheasant struts the road. A Yellow-breasted Chat surprises us with a visit among the berry bushes, and a Red-tailed Hawk begins his soaring and circling. Now and then the hawk permits a familiarity which brings him close overhead and we have a good look at each other.

Should one of the larger owls get to meandering in the daytime twilight of the woods, the entire bird population in the vicinity gathers round him with a great chattering as he looks at them with his big, round eyes.

Likewise we are attracted by the commotion and go to see the birds taking part.

We are intrigued by that weird bird, the cuckoo. It builds its nest low in the shrubbery but unseen sends out its strange sounds from the tree tops. Perhaps to escape some of the solitude, birds nest near our home—Robins in the oak and ash and nearby shelters, Catbirds and Brown Thrashers in the shrubbery, House Wrens in the little house and in the Bluebird house, the gray squirrel with her four young in the Flicker house (woodpeckers enlarge all the entrances during the winter), the Blue Jay in the ironwood tree next to the porch. We may be sure the five jay upstarts will come to successful maturity. What a mother she is—how she warms coddles and kisses her babies! She really ought to be chucking them overboard before they begin their rascality! I have watched the Blue Jay coming from a Brown Thrasher's nest where it drained the eggs. I have seen it make off with the Redstart's egg. Eggs mysteriously disappear from nests and I notice that other birds dislike the jay. However, I have learned from eminent authority that if all the progeny of one pair of Robins were to survive, in ten years that family will have grown to 19,531,250 Robins to eat my cherries!

The builders of my summer house many years ago left a shelf-like ledge beneath the cornice of the roof—an ideal shelter for sparrow nests. And sparrow nests there were, between each pair of rafters, from end to end, with all the hay, feathers and trash for which English Sparrows are infamous.

Our bedrooms on the second floor were separated from the sparrows by a single thickness of siding through which in places the light shown in. The din and racket of the sparrows began at early dawn. In order that we might sleep longer in the morning, one day I tore out the nests. There was a variety of family life in the nests, from eggs and very small birds to feathered young ready to fly.

At the end of the cornice where I had to reach from the porch roof as far as I could stretch, I had an exciting adventure. The distance between the rafters was greater there, allowing for a great mass of sparrow nest. Tearing out some of the straw, I got hold of something round that would not give with all my pulling. It seemed it must be part of the construction of the building. Reaching farther and removing more of the debris, I grasped the round object again, but it was not to be drawn out. Finally enough of the nesting material had come out so I could look in at the mystery. Something black was there and it glistened and moved!

The excitement and astonishment of finding a blacksnake in a sparrow nest under the roof 18 feet up sent me to the ground in a great hurry. After some poking with a hooked pole, the snake dropped his 4½ ft. length to the grass, and upon the insistence of some ladies who had by now appeared upon the scene, I had to put an end to him. I have often wondered how the snake made that vertical climb, but I am told some snakes can make their way up very steep places. The blacksnake is without doubt a real bird predator.

I have mentioned nothing of the warblers, the vireos, the flycatchers, or those beautiful birds, Goldfinch and Indigo Bunting, both of which may be seen nearby almost any summer's day. Nor has much been said of the rising and falling of the unceasing flow of the river, of the placid, glass-like water on still days, of its wrinkled surface when a gentle breeze blows shaded designs across it, of the day-long murmur when the wind is stouter and the river is dappled with deeper wavelets from shore to shore. Sometimes there is a roar and crashing of the giant, white-topped rollers when the current is wrestling with a really powerful wind and when the sky is heavy with storm. On clear, quiet days there are inverted reflections of the

hills and trees that reach out from the shore, and of the trim, diesel-powered boats that push whole trainloads of oil, coal, grain and merchandise up and down the stream.

However, such hills as ours, except for bird songs and occasional sounds in the distance, are a quiet place in the solitude—where meditations of friendship come into one's thoughts. We experience the delight of contented living, where the profusion of wild growing things is luxuriant, and where bird life is varied and abundant.

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## BIRDING IN MINNESOTA AND NORTH DAKOTA

By FRED W. KENT  
IOWA CITY, IOWA

My son, Tom, and I went on a northern trip from June 25 to July 6, 1955. We made the most of our opportunities for bird observation and enjoyed the trip immensely. The below running account will cover the interesting species of birds seen and will give a good idea of where we were.

Going north along the Mississippi we saw a Loon on Lake Pepin and an Egret near Red Wing, Minnesota. Near Duluth, and even in the city limits, Savannah Sparrows were singing in dry fields; we found the city populated with Yellow Warblers. Along the North Shore on a small island in Lake Superior we saw hundreds of gulls, and at a lodge near the lake the songs of many thrushes echoed through the woods at dusk, mostly of the Veery. Other highlights were a Purple Finch in full song atop a birch, a Black-throated Green Warbler catching a worm on the doorstep, and woods full of warbler songs—Redstarts, Chestnut-sides, Blackburnians, and others. We saw irate Redstarts chasing a chattering red squirrel. On Gunflint Trail I squeaked a Canada Warbler in close, White-throated Sparrows were whistling in the brush, and Least Flycatchers were everywhere. We heard Hermit Thrushes singing near the falls of Pigeon River, and on the lake near Grand Portage we saw a family of American Mergansers with the young alternately catching rides. Along a road in the deep forest a female and young Pigeon Hawk posed in a dead pine. On Moose Lake, in the canoe country near Ely, three broods of Black Ducks of different ages and quite tame were feeding along the shore.

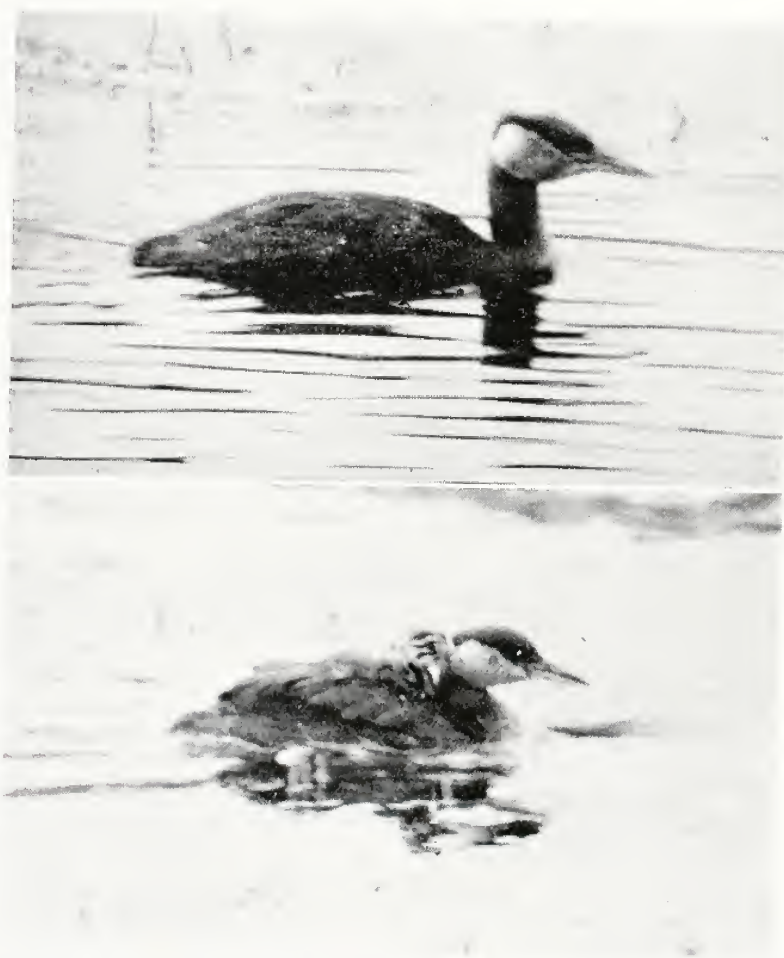
We found a different bird fauna in the evergreen country, and it seemed to be at the height of the nesting season all along as if the calendar had been turned back a month for us. On west and north along the Rainy River to the Lake of the Woods, we drove in more open country, with more of the familiar birds, but with no Starlings or English Sparrows. Not so familiar was the Sharp-tailed Grouse which clucked at us on a lonely road. We saw a nest of Cliff Swallows almost over the door of a roadside lunch stand, and a nest full of young Kingbirds on top of a transformer on a pole.

After a hot day, we enjoyed a quiet cabin on Lake Bemidji, with a dip in the lake, and at dusk the sight of an American Golden-eye with eight young just learning to dive. Back of camp was a dead tree with a hole 20 feet up which might have been the nest tree. This was a curious contrast to our previous association with this bird on the partly-frozen Mississippi back home in winter. Near Cass Lake a roadside slough disclosed a half dozen nesting Holboell's Grebes which were quite unconcerned with the nearby traffic. We also listed Black Terns, an Osprey and a Broad-winged Hawk in the vicinity. We visited Gull Lake but saw no gulls. At Itasca Park we found the Red-breasted Nuthatch.

Rather suddenly, out of forest and lake country, we descended into the flat Red River valley of wheat and sugar beets instead of the potatoes we

expected. We went into North Dakota at Grand Forks and very soon we were in the prairie country of wheat, summer-fallow, and wild mustard fields. Here the small ponds contained Coots, grebes, ducks, and always Franklin's Gulls and Black Terns were present, occasionally some Yellow-headed Blackbirds. A Willet chasing a Marsh Hawk, and a Short-eared Owl flying low over the fields in early morning, stand out in memory.

Fourth of July in the Souris Marsh was a special day for us. We were alone except for the birds, and even they seemed concealed in the vast reaches of the waving marsh. Coots, grebes and Ruddy Ducks dived or splashed in every pool of open water, and many species of ducks were feeding or flushing as we walked out on the dikes. Young grebes crying, Black-crowned Night Herons flushing with annoyed squawks, a pair of Western Grebes, a pelican on a distant spit, Clay-colored Sparrows buzzing at mid-day along a faint dry trail, and in a large flat marsh thousands of ducks



HOLBOELL'S GREBE

Two photographs taken by Tom Kent at Souris, North Dakota, July 4, 1955. Note the young bird riding on back of adult in the lower picture.

and hundreds of shore-birds, including Marbled Godwits—all those sights and sounds made that day and place a high spot in our trip and to be long remembered.

Other vivid memories include twilight in the Turtle Mountains, green wheat fields, little towns all with big grain elevators, Devils Lake—and back to Iowa for the hot weather, concluding a good trip for bird observation and general photography.

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## THE SAGA OF A CARDINAL NEST

By WILLIAM YOUNG WORTH  
SIOUX CITY, IOWA

The word saga deals with heroism according to one interpretation. In this particular tale the hero is really a male Cardinal.

For 30 years we have been trying to convert a bare loess (or yellow clay) bank into a livable yard. We have finally succeeded in getting a passable stand of grass and a few low shrubs to take hold. Of bird migrants my wife and I have had many over the years, but nesters have been confined to a few Robins. Imagine, then, our unbonded joy, when, during the first week of August 1954, a female Cardinal flew into a syringa bush just 3 feet from our back porch and proceeded to pick a nesting site 6 feet from the ground.

Although under the sharp scrutiny of our Siamese cat, nest-building continued with numerous off periods and with many tidbits brought by the male; these he fed to the female near the nest. The nest was completed and the first egg deposited on August 8. Two more eggs followed and the clutch was complete. Incubation then began in earnest. We noticed that much of the time the female was away from the nest, and the male was nowhere in sight. The eggs were left unattended for hours at a time. It was then that our vigil started, for Blue Jays and Grackles chose perches nearer the house and we knew it was a matter of time until they took the eggs.

Our best ammunition was a pail of windfall apples near the door. On the appearance of the jays and grackles, several well-aimed shots crashing through the tree branches usually sent the marauders excitedly on their way. Once when we were a bit lax, the male Cardinal arrived just in time to save the nest. With a vicious dash he chased a Blue Jay from the scene. Twice we chased wandering cats, which were first detected by the Cardinals. Once a squirrel was routed from the neighborhood. The nesting continued well until the evening of August 15, when suddenly just before 10 p.m. we heard a few sharp chips as the female left the nest and flew away in the darkness. We immediately rushed out with a flashlight, thinking of cats, owls or other predators but found nothing amiss. As we waited for the bird to return, we felt sure this was the climax to the nesting effort. We finally retired, but on hearing a few sharp chips from the female, we again hurried outdoors. With our light we could see the female safely back on her nest, having been gone the better part of an hour. Passerine birds must be able to see in darkness much better than we realize, for here was a bird that flew off far enough to be out of hearing and then returned to her nest without trouble.

Thirteen days after the mother bird started actual incubating, the first egg hatched. The father bird now took over in earnest and began feeding the young bird. A day or two later when both birds were gone, we looked into the nest. There we saw the one young and two unhatched eggs. Our observations showed that, in at least this instance where only one young was in the nest, the male Cardinal does nearly all the feeding. Only on rare occasions was the female seen to bring food to the nest. Most of the food consisted of green caterpillars of various sizes.

When the lone nestling was five days old, the female quit night-brooding; that is, actually sitting on the nest over the bird. This was affirmed by making nightly inspections at different hours; each time the female was perched on the edge of the nest. The last three nights the baby bird was entirely alone, as the mother did not return after dark. Both birds, however, appeared at the nest very early each morning. On the tenth morning after the baby had hatched, both parents appeared early and began to coax the young one from the nest. They succeeded after two hours of calling. The young Cardinal scrambled from the nest and flew 6 feet to a tree. Apparently this was what the female was waiting for. She flew away and was never seen again near the offspring or in the neighborhood. Her work was done and she left the baby to the care of the father.

Father Cardinal's troubles were just beginning, for in a short time a flock of Blue Jays attacked him and tried to get at the little bird. We helped out and for eight hours we battled them, as the father coaxed the young bird from tree to tree. Our supply of apples ran out and we resorted to stones. A neighbor lady joined us with bow and arrows and shot at the Blue Jays. Finally the baby Cardinal flew into a yard too far away for us to continue the defense. There we saw how overwhelming numbers of jays kill our fine song birds. Two jays attacked the parent bird and he was chased away from his offspring. Then a half dozen other jays mobbed the helpless infant. With tear-filled eyes and heavy hearts we made our way back to the house.

Contrary to some accounts of fragile nests, our female Cardinal built a fairly substantial nest, well formed and beautifully lined with fine rootlets. It stood two heavy rain and wind storms and looked strong enough to stand several more nestings. Upon examining the eggs, one was found to be infertile with the yolk intact. The other had an embryo started but apparently not strong enough to carry on. The weather during the nesting period was hot and humid, with frequent rain fall and night temperatures running from 60° to 75° F. This probably accounted for some of the female's restlessness and the fact that she did not night-brood during the last part of her nesting period.

Stray cats were at once attacked by both birds, but our Siamese cat seemed to be accepted from the first day and little fuss was made about him, although he often snoozed in the shade of the syringa bush. He was tethered to 50 feet of nylon rope and as he made no attempt to molest the birds, they paid little attention to him. The female Cardinal sang beautifully and loudly, often on the nest or near the nest. She sang much more than did the male. The female was very foolish in chipping loudly every time she left the nest or returned, thereby advertising the presence of the nest to all predatory killers.

It is easy to understand why many of our fine passerine birds are being rapidly reduced in numbers. We control predatory animals, but let the predatory Grackle and Blue Jay reproduce in huge numbers. City ordinances do not allow shooting them in the cities. These big, aggressive birds reproduce almost unhampered and the small, defenseless ones head for oblivion.

#### GENERAL NOTES

**Another Grosbeak Food.**—Rose-breasted Grosbeaks are very industrious in their feeding habits, and I was not surprised when I saw an adult grosbeak busily feeding in the top of a Persian lilac. Nearer approach revealed that this bird was splitting the green seed pods and extracting the seeds, which it seemed to eat with relish. As the date was mid-summer, August 3, 1953, the seeds that I examined were meaty but still in the soft stage. It was with pleasure that I added another grosbeak food to the numerous items I had seen this bird eat during its summer stay with us.—WM. YOUNG-WORTH, Sioux City, Iowa.

**Upland Plovers in Iowa.**—During the spring and summer of 1955, I saw what seemed to me an unusual number of Upland Plovers. My records are: 4 northwest of Dunkerton, 1 south of Dunkerton, 2 near Emmetsburg, 1 west of Charles City, 1 west of Oelwein, 1 west of Waterloo, 1 northeast of Dumont.—RUSSELL M. HAYS, Waterloo, Iowa.

**Flicker Imprisoned in Chimney.**—On the morning of August 7, 1955, Paul Pierce heard a tapping on the clean-out cover at the bottom of his chimney in his home at Ryan, Iowa. He investigated, not knowing whether to expect a bird or animal. He pulled the cover out and found a bird which at first he thought was a Crow. It proved to be a soot-covered, adult Flicker. The bird hopped onto the cement floor, and when Paul opened a basement window it immediately flew outdoors, apparently not much worse for wear. The Flicker evidently fell into the chimney sometime during the preceding day—an accident that seldom happens to this species as far as we know. The chimney is 25 feet deep with a 12-inch flue. The bird had made many attempts to fly up the chimney but could ascend only about 10 feet. It had stirred up a cloud of soot which sifted through a small opening in the chimney and out into the basement.—F. J. P.

**Chimney Swifts in a Fireplace.**—In the summer of 1953, after we had a severe wind and rain storm, we heard a peculiar noise in our fireplace and upon investigating found a nest of Chimney Swifts. There were four little birds in the nest. We thought the wind had blown the nest down inside the fireplace, and we worried about how they would get out, but after two or three weeks we heard them no more. We looked into the nest and the birds were gone. The past summer (1955) we went to Wisconsin for a week and when we came back the little birds were in the fireplace. When the mother fed them it sounded a good deal like a radio alarm clock going off. We were happy to find it was by choice that the swifts made their nest in our fireplace rather than by accident.—MRS. C. U. SOOTS, Ottumwa, Iowa.



SHORE-BIRDS ON AMANA LAKE  
Semipalmated Sandpipers photographed by Fred W. Kent, May 21, 1955

**The Whisper Song of the Meadowlark.**—As the active bird-watcher goes through life, he often watches birds do things he has not before seen them do, and although the action may be well known to ornithologists, it is a first time for him and is very soul-satisfying. I have heard various species of birds give their whisper songs, but on November 30, 1953, I was privileged to hear the whisper song of a Meadowlark for the first time.

We were pheasant hunting along a weedy fence row near the elevator siding of McNally, Sioux County, Iowa, when we flushed a flock of ten Meadowlarks. One of the birds flew to the top of a telegraph pole, and in the stillness of the afternoon I heard a faint song. I continued walking very slowly and when I was as near as I thought I could approach, I stopped. The full song of the Western Meadowlark was being given by this bird. I stood there for nearly ten minutes enthralled by the sweet, whispered song of a bird that ordinarily is a very loud songster. When I first heard my whispering Meadowlark it was at a distance of about 75 feet. When the songster flew, I stepped off the distance and it was a scant 55 feet. By some stroke of fortune, I managed to bag one pheasant that afternoon, but my day was already made after my encounter with the whispering Meadowlark.—WM. YOUNG WORTH, Sioux City, Iowa.

**Bird Notes from the Lamoni Region.**—On May 1, 1955, my husband told me he had found a Prairie Horned Lark's nest on the terrace of an alfalfa field. He said the nest had one egg and two very young birds. An hour later he took me to see it. When we looked into the nest which was on the ground, we saw only one bird and one egg. We discovered the other bird lying in the grass outside the nest. Because it was still alive, I put it back in the nest. When I went back to the house I wondered if I should have put it back. The parent birds, I thought, probably knew why (and if) they had thrown it out. It wasn't until the next evening that I observed the nest again. When I looked into the nest I saw both birds very much alive, much to my surprise. As I looked up from the nest, I was startled to see a fox bound away into the alfalfa field. Two more observations were made on May 7 and 8. The markings on the fledglings showed both were Horned Larks. On May 10 I looked again and they had flown. In only ten days from the time they hatch, they are able to leave the nest and run off into the weeds. Can anyone give me an explanation why that bird was thrown out of the nest?

On June 2, 1955, I had to stop the car to let a baby Upland Plover cross a graveled road on the Iowa-Missouri state line. The parent birds were very much wrought up, and when I got out of the car they circled, flew over me and tried to lure me away from the place where the baby plover had escaped into the grass. Upland Plovers nest every summer in our pasture, but I have never located a nest. Our farm is .2 mile over the line in Missouri.

One night after school one of my students wanted to show me a pheasant's nest that he had found in a meadow bordering Home Pond, the source of Lamoni's water supply. We found a more beautiful bird to study, an Avocet wading in the shallow water on the edge of the pond. This is the first time I have ever seen an Avocet in Iowa, although I made a study of them when I took field ornithology at the University of Colorado in the summer of 1949 (Iowa Bird Life, Vol. XX, pp. 66-67). While we were watching the Avocet it flew over the pond and circled back to its original spot. Its black and white wings make a beautiful picture when in flight.—MRS. W. C. DE LONG, Lamoni, Iowa.

**Further Notes on the Blue Grosbeak in Western Iowa.**—When Dr. Clyde R. Griffen, Sioux City dentist, first told me about having spent some of his childhood in the now ghost town of Peiro, Woodbury County, little did I know that on my first trip to explore this lost hamlet I would climax all my Blue Grosbeak records for this area in a single day.

On the morning of August 11, 1955, I started off at a reasonable hour and drove down highway 141. After passing Bronson I soon reached the sharp curve known as Camp Creek. As I slowed down to about 20 miles per hour, I heard the sweet, rolling warble of a Blue Grosbeak. I observed the bird with my glass and was soon on my way again, happy in the thought that I had found this grosbeak in an area new to me for our county. Proceeding southeast, I took the first gravel road that led to Climbing Hill and had barely reached the top of the first hill when again I heard the fine song of the Blue Grosbeak. Driving on a few hundred yards, I again heard the song and saw the bird perched on some low shrubbery along a fence row. Then to the north on the hillside I heard another Blue Grosbeak singing. I knew I had run into a little nesting colony. Driving on through the town of Climbing Hill, I saw no more grosbeaks, but when one mile west of Peiro, a pair flew across the road in front of the car.

I wanted to see what was once Peiro from every angle so drove around the section and came in from the north. First I came to the quaint old cemetery, which the early settlers had laid out with a planting of pine and spruce trees. The pine trees had grown especially well, with wide, spreading branches; each headstone was shaded by the great, sweeping arms of these trees. Quietly I wandered under the pines, and out from under my feet exploded a covey of Quail. I heard wings above and, looking up, I saw that I had disturbed a family of Sparrow Hawks. Next to the cemetery is the old parsonage and next to it the neat white Peiro Bethel Church. I drove on by a few scattered houses which was once the village and saw a tumbled-down house near by. A friendly farmer appeared at this point, and explained that the old Griffen general store building had long been torn down, as had the flourishing cream station. Only the old house remained and I could see that it would soon disappear into a heap of rotted boards. Lunch time was at hand. I could think of no better place to eat than under a tree where I could look out over the lost town site and wonder about the folks who had lived there when the horse was still king.

My spirits were a bit low as I quietly drove off, but a mile southeast I saw an unmistakable female Blue Grosbeak. As she flew along the roadside I was again in a gayer mood. One mile north of Smithland I spotted another Grosbeak, a male. Traveling on down the Little Sioux River valley, I turned east to the high bluffs at Kennebec, another abandoned town, and as I did so, a male Blue Grosbeak flew across the road with food in its mouth. I faithfully worked the bluff from this spot to the town of Turin, but found only one more male bird although it looked like good grosbeak country.

To those bird watchers unfamiliar with the Blue Grosbeak in this area, it may not be amiss to state that this bird is a late arrival in the spring, with the average arrival date about May 20. Therefore its first nesting is late, and by the time it is well into its second nesting, August has arrived and fall is at hand. Yet in August the male birds are in fine plumage and are singing beautifully, especially in the morning. It is not unusual in this area to find young still being fed in the nest in the latter part of August. It was apparent that I had found at least nine nesting pairs of Blue Grosbeaks in south-central Woodbury County on my expedition to visit the village of Peiro. My day had been wonderfully successful.—WM. YOUNG-WORTH, Sioux City, Iowa.

**Bird Observations at Chariton.**—We were interested in the reports of Red-breasted Nuthatches seen in various areas of the state, as printed in Iowa Bird Life. We have them at our window feeding station every winter—two or three pairs that visit us in an average winter. Mr. Tennant, who maintains an unusually well equipped backyard feeding station in the center of town, several times last winter had a Red-breast take food from his hand; the bird seemed unafraid and in no hurry. The winter before (1953-54) a pair of Red Crossbills came to the Tennant backyard and stayed several days. They were viewed by many interested persons.

Our own feeding station is an extension of the window sill. If we can't get them up that near, we feel we have failed. We have clocked the Red-breasted Nuthatch at 20 consecutive trips for nuts from our station in 37 minutes. We have had them sit on the base of the window frame and look in for two minutes.

We have developed the hobby of seeing birds along the roadside from the auto, and to us roadside describes any place that can be driven to such as a park or up a lane, as well as a regular road. My wife and I have been enjoying this hobby for 20 years, and among our friends we have developed some ardent bird watchers (from cars) who haven't the time or health to hike. We teach car safety right along with the bird watching, and our slogan is, "Never stop the car in a dangerous spot—your safety first, then look at the birds." On the average, we can see about 35 to 44 birds in 1½ hours. We find the best way to interest new people is to find where the birds are and then take the new fans out and call the birds down to view. That really interests them. We can't always do this, but many times Baltimore and Orchard Orioles, Yellow-billed and Black-billed Cuckoos, Towhees, Yellow-throats, Indigo Buntings, Bluebirds, Tufted Titmice, Wood Pewees, Rose-breasted Grosbeaks, Brown Thrashers, Cedar Waxwings, Yellow Warblers, Green and Great Blue Herons, owls, Prairie Horned Larks, White-crowned, White-throated and Lark Sparrows, and many others can be called out. We stress winter feeding, too, and probably have more people doing this than actual bird watching.

One summer day (1955) a farmer brought in an albino bird of sparrow size. It was entirely white with pink eyes, bill and feet. We could not identify it, and the farmer offered to show us where it flew up in a field and perhaps some of the adult birds it was with. With six other interested people I went to the farm. We spread out in a line and walked toward the spot designated in the field. Many adult birds were flushed and they were all Lark Sparrows. Soon another albino bird flew up and was able to flutter to a tree. It was the same as the other albino, young but fully feathered and all white. We felt that two albinos from the same place was quite unusual. The young albino which had been caged and brought to town was to have been photographed, but it died before a picture could be taken. The dead body of the second one was found beneath a tree a little later, supposedly a victim of a hawk since there were numerous Cooper's Hawks in the vicinity.

I tried to get a picture of young Screech Owls sitting in a crock of water late at night in our backyard. They were hatched in our maple tree and were later driven out by a swarm of bees. They took up quarters in another tree as if nothing had happened.

Both species of cuckoos seemed to be more plentiful in 1955, as did Red-headed Woodpeckers. Red-heads were scarce during the two previous years. The Pileated Woodpecker has been reported in the Chariton River bottomland country, and I am on the lookout for it. As a groceryman my time for bird watching is limited, with a yearly list of about 70 species. My

wife's and my life list is around 160 species seen in this region, and our list at the winter feeding station or nearby is about 30 species.—ROBERT L. PIPER, Chariton, Iowa.

**Mockingbird at Spencer.**—About 10:30 p.m. of May 1, 1955, we thought we heard a Mockingbird sing. After we listened a half hour we knew it could be nothing else, so we took a spotlight and followed the song into the middle of the pasture across the road from our house in Spencer. There, deep in a large brush-pile, we positively identified him with the light. He was still singing when we retired about midnight. Several times during the night when we awakened he was singing. The next morning I was able to leave work and to go to the wood pile five times. Each time he was singing—always from deep within the brush. He gave excellent imitations of Blue Jay, Robin, Cardinal, Whip-poor-will, Bob-white, and Titmouse. Frequently a pair of Brown Thrashers would fly from trees bordering the field to the brush heap, land on it, look within and then fly away. A strong southeast wind blew all day on May 1 and continued all night. By evening of May 2, when we returned from work, the Mockingbird was no longer present. The wind had shifted to northwest and was equally as strong as before. The next morning, May 3, the farmer burned the brush heap. We never heard the Mockingbird again.—EUNICE M. CHRISTENSEN, Spencer, Iowa.

**A Flying Trip to Florida.**—The late afternoon of June 27, 1955, found us winging our way from Spencer, Iowa, to Everglades, Florida, in our Cessna. Enroute we flew over Reelfoot Lake in Northwestern Tennessee. This shallow body of water was formed by a series of earthquakes in 1811-1812. It is a bird haven throughout the year. As we flew over it we saw many American Egrets feeding and flying.

The Everglades airstrip where we landed June 29 is on the edge of the small town of the same name. It is bordered by the Gulf of Mexico and mangrove trees. Late that afternoon we joined an Audubon Tour led by Charles Brookfield. It had rained hard in Everglades most of the day, and numerous thunderheads were building up and moving swiftly across the sky of the gulf as we traveled by boat to Duck Rock, one of the Ten Thousand Islands chain. To this mangrove island come each sundown during the summer many thousands of White Ibis. Our two boats of 15 people anchored about 300 feet offshore alongside the Audubon warden's boat. While we ate a picnic lunch on deck we watched these birds return from many everglade feeding areas to roost. The birds flew single file in lines sometimes 3 miles long. Each line followed the flight pattern of the leader. Joining them from time to time on the mangrove branches were small flocks of other birds including Brown Pelicans, Roseate Spoonbills, Florida Cormorants and Man-o'-War Birds. The show was suddenly over at sundown, so we returned to the town of Everglades for the night.—DR. AND MRS. EVERETT D. CHRISTENSEN, Spencer, Iowa.

**Aerial Feeding of the Purple Martin.**—Of all the aerial feats of birds, it is not the mighty stoop of a Golden Eagle directed at a troop of tormenting Crows, not the spectacular flip-over in mid-air of the Marsh Hawk as it catches the mouse dropped by its mate, not even the dazzling dive of the Duck Hawk as it slashes a Blue-winged Teal down to the soggy spring fields,—it is not any of these that intrigues me most. It is the aerial feeding of the Purple Martin, a display that many observers may consider insignificant.

The time to watch this rather minor activity of aerial bird life is a mid-summer afternoon, when the newly airborne (juvenile) martins may have a smart breeze to fly into. Favorite martin perches were formerly the tops of dead trees, but modern living has supplied a new perch, the television an-

tenna. The equipment needed for observation, includes a pair of binoculars and a reclining lawn chair.

At this time the martins are usually in family groups composed of the parents and four or five young. They fly in and perch on the antenna cross-bars and after a bit the male bird takes off to circle high in the sky. One young bird launches itself into the air and by strong flight soon reaches the soaring parents. Now comes the interesting performance. The youngster turns into the stiff wind and almost comes to a stop. The parent also comes into the wind, but quickly turns and by vigorous braking with its wings pauses for an instant while it crams the beakful of food into the wide open maw of the young martin. Sometimes the pass is successful by perfect timing and the youngster sails away contented, but sometimes the exchange is faulty and the male will make another swing around and try again. Often the young will scale down to the cross-bar amid much chattering, and if it is already adept at landing, will set down easily. If it is clumsy it will hit the cross-bar with a hard blow on its breast and slide on over, with its feet clutching at nothing. This means another try. Usually when one juvenile comes in another one will take off to make feeding contact with the male.

The particular family that I often watched had an apparently unattached male as a member of their group. On several occasions I watched him go aloft and feed one of the young ones. As far as I could determine, the female martin did not go in for these aerial maneuvers. I did not once see her feed the young in this manner, although regularly both parents would fly up to the cross-bars and feed the sitting youngsters, the parents still a-wing.

I cannot imagine a more peaceful or interesting sight in nature—to watch the high-feeding Purple Martin and listen to him call his young to feed them a choice insect high above the earth. The late Dr. T. C. Stephens and I once made a tour of the Iowa state parks. At one spot we rested on the shady bank of a quiet river and watched the martins high overhead feeding their young. It was one of those times when one wished to live forever.—WM. YOUNG WORTH, Sioux City, Iowa.

**Re-examination in the Spring.**—Spring in Iowa sometimes comes with a rush, but occasionally the cold winds stay with us until we almost go into summer and our spring seems to have gotten lost. But the migrating birds come regardless of weather, and we enjoy their presence after the long Iowa winter. How forgetful we are of their songs and other characteristics; we actually forget these properties from year to year.

One of the finest of nature writers, Henry David Thoreau, a century ago put this subject into fine English. I give his quotation in full. "Each new year is a surprise to us. We find that we had virtually forgotten the note of each bird, and when we hear it again, it is remembered like a dream, reminding us of a previous state of existence. How happens it that the associations it awakens are always pleasing, never saddening, reminiscences of our sanest hours. The voice of nature is always encouraging." (Early Spring in Massachusetts, 1882 edition, p. 170.)

In the spring of 1953, while on a field trip near McCook Lake with two capable bird-watchers, I called out "Wood Thrush." The other two went on, while I turned off to find the Wood Thrush. Much to my chagrin I found I was catching the last part of a Red-winged Blackbird's "O-Ka-Lee" and my Wood Thrush was non-existent. I hear and see Wood Thrushes many times a season, yet in one year I found that, like Thoreau, I had just about forgotten the bird's song.

Once in a while a truly fine book on birds appears in our literature. The latest by Herbert Brandt, "Arizona and Its Bird Life", is in this class.

While diligently studying this book I have come across several statements by the author in which he tells how easy it is to mis-identify birds in the field, even with the best binoculars. He says that on some trips he doesn't seem to identify more than one-half of the birds he sees. I think if most of us observers were honest with ourselves, we would admit the same thing during the warbler flight in spring, and certainly in the fall.

On page 385 of the above book, Herbert Brandt puts it plainly, probably bluntly to non-collectors, but nevertheless to the point: "As we stumble along through the darkness of ignorance seeking bits of enlightenment concerning the processes of nature, the method of approach to our problems is an important factor. In the broad field of bird study the necessity of collecting specimens is obvious and a standard practice among ornithologists. The margin of error in field work is so broad that concrete evidence is required before the student himself dares fully to trust his own observations, especially in the many matters of identification, which is usually the very foundation of further inquiry."

For me, re-examination in the spring will be in order. Too often sight identifications without much backing get into print, and years later in retrospect we wish that we had a specimen, even a poor one such as I make up, to bolster our assurances.—WM. YOUNG WORTH, Sioux City, Iowa.



RING-NECKED DUCK

From a drawing by Earnest W. Steffen, Cedar Rapids, Iowa

**Bird Observations on a Trip in the Southwest.**—During a vacation trip in June, 1955, we made some interesting observations of birds. At the Lake of the Cherokees in the northeast corner of Oklahoma we saw nesting Painted Buntings and Bewick's Wrens. Farther south, near Fort Smith, Arkansas, we spotted Scissor-tailed Flycatchers for the first time but saw them

frequently thereafter as we traveled west across the state of Texas, where we also saw Bullock's Oriole, Road-runner and Plain Titmouse. In Arizona, at Canyon De Chelley National Monument, we found Mountain Chickadees and Canyon Wrens in abundance, along with White-throated Swifts. In Walnut Canyon National Monument we watched and listened to the Spurred Towhee, a subspecies of Spotted Towhee, also Long-crested Jay and Chestnut-backed Bluebird. At Sunset Crater National Monument we took color movies of Lewis's Woodpecker. We saw Desert Sparrows, Pinon Jays, and many others. On the way back we saw Rocky Mountain Grosbeak in Garden of the Gods, Colorado.—JOHN PAUL MOORE, Newton, Iowa.

### RECENT BIRD BOOKS

WHERE TO FIND BIRDS IN MINNESOTA, compiled by Kenneth D. Morrison, W. J. Breckenridge and Josephine Daneman Herz. Revised edition (Itasca Press, Webb Publishing Co., St. Paul, 1955; spiral board binding, 5 x 7½ in., pp. i-xiii+1-157, with numerous maps & text drawings; price, \$2.00).

This is a revised and enlarged edition of the book published under the same title in 1950 (reviewed in *Iowa Bird Life*, Vol. XXI, 1951, p. 22). That book was the first of its kind for any state and contained detailed descriptions of 62 of what were considered the best birding areas in Minnesota. The new edition has been increased 35 pages in size and contains reports on 78 areas. The entire text of the former edition was worked over and brought up to date so that the new book will accurately direct bird students to the most profitable birding territories—a fine guide book for many years to come. It will be especially useful to outsiders going into the state on vacation trips.

The book is divided into four sections, each representing roughly one-fourth of the state. There is a map of each section; these tie into another map showing the entire state. The key cities for birding areas are shown and they are listed in alphabetical order on a page following the map. Then the areas are taken up under the respective cities near which they lie, with concise information on how to reach them, features of the terrain and vantage points for observation, as well as a list of birds that should be found there at a certain season. Important past records are also mentioned. About 60 contributors reported on their findings in the 78 birding areas, which are to be reached from 35 cities and towns. More than 275 species were reported by the contributors, and they are listed in some 1,400 indexed entries under the respective areas.

Minnesota can be proud of having originated the idea of a state bird-finding guide. That such a book is in demand and sells so well is a clear indication of the healthy, growing interest of bird study in our neighboring state.—F. J. P.

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BIRD HOUSES, BATHS AND FEEDING SHELTERS, by Edmund J. Sawyer (Cranbrook Institute of Science, Bloomfield Hills, Mich., 5th edition, 1955; paper wrappers, pp. 1-36, with 16 drawings by the author; price, 50c).

The present printing of 6,000 brings the total number of copies of this booklet up to 21,500, certainly an impressive figure. The author gives a fine outline of how to make houses for various kinds of birds and where to place them—House Wren, Chickadee, White-breasted Nuthatch, Tufted Titmouse,

Tree Swallow, Bluebird, Crested Flycatcher, Flicker, Purple Martin, Wood Duck, and others that make particularly desirable neighbors. There are plans and specifications for the different structures, as well as for feeding stations, and a good general discussion of the subject in an introductory chapter.—F. J. P.

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#### EDITOR'S NOTE

The Editor has finished a very busy, crowded summer. Most of the work on this September issue was done during the last week of August.

The second week in September Editor Pierce and wife with Mr. and Mrs. Kenneth Freeman of Winthrop took a northern vacation trip. The North Shore Drive, along Lake Superior, was followed from Duluth, Minnesota, to Port Arthur, Ontario. From Port Arthur they drove northeast to Nipigon Bay then to the town of Terrace Bay, which is almost at the end of the road. Returning to Port Arthur, the northwest route to Kenora was taken, then a drive along the east portion of the Lake of the Woods, with return to United States at International Falls. The route home was through the Iron Range in the vicinity of Hibbing, then to the Twin Cities and Rochester, Minnesota. The scenery along the North Shore Drive was of the finest, and there were interesting birds to observe along the way.

The summer months are vacation time, and we are glad to include a number of fine trips by our members to regions outside of Iowa. We have heard of several other trips by our members and hope that we may have reports of them later on. O. P. Allert visited northern Minnesota, particularly the iron-mine country around Hibbing, in June. Dennis Carter spent part of the summer banding ducks for the South Dakota Game and Fish Dept. at the refuge near Madison (had banded 266 birds when writing on June 26). James Sieh did similar work as a representative of the Iowa Conservation Commission in Alberta. Mr. and Mrs. George Crossley left August 26 for a three-weeks trip to the West Coast, with Washington as the main objective.

This issue includes most of the material we have on hand for publication, and there will be no opportunity to print other notes until the March, 1956, issue. This year rounds out another five-year span of our magazine, and, as has been customary in the past, the December issue will be devoted entirely to the five-year index. We feel that the index is one of our most important features, for it puts the entire contents of five years into readily accessible form, as well as the names of all authors and a great deal of other information. In short, most of the material we have published would be hopelessly buried without the index. Woodward Brown has been doing the indexing issue by issue—a job of no small proportions—and we hope to have the December index issue published at about the usual time, shortly after January 1.

The Christmas bird census will be published in the next March issue. We hope that many of our members will take part at their respective stations. While we have no rigid rules for the census-taking, we would like the form of previous censuses to be followed as closely as possible, with the dates between December 20 and January 5. We would prefer to have lists of at least five hours or longer. They are much more valuable than shorter lists or those made at home feeding stations, for they give a more representative picture of the bird life in a given area. Send your census to the Editor of Iowa Bird Life not later than January 20, 1956.—F. J. P.